

St. Clair County River Accesses

Birdsong Conservation Area
Blackjack Access
Kings Prairie Access

Ten-Year Area Management Plan FY 2017-2026



Lisa B. Allen

Forestry Division Chief

12-20-14

Date

Saint Clair County River Accesses Management Plan Approval Page

PLANNING TEAM

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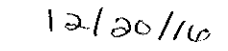

Signature


Date

FORESTRY DIVISION

Forest Management Chief


Signature


Date

OVERVIEW

Area Name	Area Number	Year Acquired	Acreage	County	Administrative Responsibility	Maintenance Responsibility
Birdsong Conservation Area (CA)	8043	1980	430	St. Clair	Forestry	Forestry
Blackjack Access	8328	1983	212	St. Clair	Forestry	Forestry
Kings Prairie Access	8116	1981	285	St. Clair	Forestry	Forestry

Statements of Purpose:

A. Strategic Direction

These areas are managed to provide public fishing access in St. Clair County along the Sac River, Brush Creek and Weaubleau Creek for both boat and bank anglers.

B. Desired Future Condition

The desired future landscape conditions of Birdsong Conservation Area (CA), Blackjack Access and Kings Prairie Access are restored natural landscapes that provide public recreation. Birdsong CA will include healthy riparian forested corridors, oak savanna, and woodlands. Blackjack Access will include healthy riparian forested corridors, blackjack savanna and oak woodlands; and a native warm-season grass planting. Kings Prairie Access will include expanded riparian forested corridors, healthy bottomland hardwood forest, savanna, and grassland.

C. Federal Aid Statement

N/A

GENERAL INFORMATION AND CONDITIONS

I. Special Considerations

Area Name	Priority Areas	Natural Areas
Birdsong CA	Brush Creek Fisheries Priority Watershed	Brush Creek Natural Area (0.61 acres)
Blackjack Access	Brush Creek Fisheries Priority Watershed	None
Kings Prairie Access	Weaubleau Creek Fisheries Priority Watershed	None

II. Important Natural Features and Resources

Area Name	Species of Conservation Concern	Caves	Springs
Birdsong CA	Yes ¹	None	1
Blackjack Access	None observed ²	None	None
King's Prairie Access	None observed ²	None	None

¹ Species of conservation concern are known from this area. Area Managers should consult the Natural Heritage Database annually and review all management activities with the Natural History Biologist.

² Species of conservation concern are not known from this area, but are found in the surrounding area. Area Managers should consult annually with the Natural History Biologist.

III. Existing Infrastructure

Area Name	Concrete Ramp	Boat Slide	Parking Area #	Privy	Other
Birdsong CA	None	None	3	None	3 primitive campsites
Blackjack Access	1	None	3	1	2 primitive campsites
Kings Prairie Access	None	1	2	None	2 primitive campsites

IV. Area Restrictions or Limitations

Area Name	Deed Restrictions	Federal Interest	Easements	Cultural Resources	Hazards	Endangered Species	Boundary Issues
Birdsong CA	None known	Yes ¹	Yes ^{2,3}	None known	None observed	Yes ⁵	None
Blackjack Access	None known	Yes ¹	Yes ²	None known	None observed	None observed	None
Kings Prairie Access	None known	Yes ¹	Yes ^{2,3,4}	None known	None observed	None observed	None

¹ Federal funds may be used in the management of this land. Fish and wildlife agencies may not allow recreational activities and related facilities that would interfere with the purpose for which the State is managing the land. Other uses may be acceptable and must be assessed in each specific situation.

² Missouri Department of Transportation highway right of way easement

³ KAMO / Sac Osage Electrical Co-Op powerline right of way easement

⁴ U.S. Army Corp of Engineers Truman Reservoir flowage easement

⁵ Endangered Species are known from this area. In addition, federally designated critical habitat exists on this area. Area Managers should consult the Natural Heritage Database annually and review all management activities with the Natural History Biologist.

MANAGEMENT CONSIDERATIONS

V. Terrestrial Resource Management Considerations

Challenges and Opportunities:

- 1) Inadequate riparian corridors. Portions of existing riparian corridors do not meet Watershed and Stream Management Guidelines.
- 2) Soil erosion from row cropping compromises stream bank integrity.
- 3) Management on these small areas centers on natural communities, including riparian forest, woodland, savanna, open glades, and grassland. Opportunity exists to improve these natural communities.
- 4) Non-native invasive species threaten native plants and animals.

Management Objective 1: Establish and maintain forested riparian corridors that meet Watershed and Stream Management Guidelines.

Strategy 1: Eliminate row cropping. (Forestry)

Strategy 2: Establish tree plantings to achieve desired riparian corridors. (Forestry)

Management Objective 2: Minimize soil erosion.

Strategy 1: Ensure roads and road-side drainages are managed to reduce runoff, sedimentation and erosion. (Forestry)

Strategy 2: Where feasible, move field access roads away from the 50-foot wide stream corridor on tributary streams. (Forestry, Design & Development)

Strategy 3: Eliminate row cropping. (Forestry)

Management Objective 3: Restore natural communities.

Strategy 1: Evaluate and identify current condition of natural communities. (Forestry)

Strategy 2: Restore bottomland hardwoods, upland woodlands, savannas and native grassland using management practices including, but not limited to, tree removal and prescribed burning. (Forestry)

Strategy 3: Establish native grass plantings to recreate upland grasslands. (Forestry)

Management Objective 4: Actively reduce invasive and exotic species.

Strategy 1: Monitor annually for invasive and exotic species. (Forestry)

Strategy 2: Reduce invasive and exotic species through management practices including but not limited to chemical applications and mechanical thinning. (Forestry)

VI. Aquatic Resource Management Considerations

Challenges and Opportunities:

- 1) Altered landscapes have significantly changed the hydrology at these river accesses. Land conversion and reservoir construction/ management have altered habitats and threaten aquatic biodiversity.
- 2) The St. Clair County River Accesses provide public fishing access. There are several ponds on the areas, but none are presently identified or managed for fishing.
- 3) At Blackjack Access, Brush Creek is impacted by the fluctuating water levels of the Sac River from the Stockton Dam operation. On Kings Prairie Access, Weaubleau Creek has predominantly clear water and clean gravel. However, downstream of the area, the Harry S. Truman Reservoir causes the stream to become more sluggish and dingy. Aquatic species of conservation concern are known on, or nearby, all of the St. Clair County River Access areas. All management activities on the areas should be consistent with conservation of these species.
- 4) Streams of various sizes are present at the St. Clair County River Access. Stream order sizes range from first to sixth order. Topographic maps indicate there are approximately 5.3 miles of streams on the three areas.

Management Objective 1: Inventory all existing ponds on the areas for their suitability as fishing ponds.

Strategy 1: Evaluate condition of pond basins and their watersheds to assess potential use as fishing ponds. (Fisheries)

Strategy 2: Sample fish communities in potential fishing ponds. (Fisheries)

Management Objective 2: Manage any newly identified fishing ponds.

Strategy 1: Update any newly identified fishing ponds as such in all internal documents such as area maps and brochures, Missouri Department of Conservation Atlas database and federal aid documents. (Fisheries)

Strategy 3: Monitor fish communities in fishing ponds based on Priority Three status (monitoring is conducted as needed, as opposed to regularly scheduled). (Fisheries)

Strategy 4: On a supplemental basis, periodically stock with fish species as appropriate to achieve management goals. (Fisheries)

Strategy 5: Monitor and manage vegetation in fishing ponds. (Fisheries)

Management Objective 3: Protect, enhance and maintain stream resources.

Strategy 1: Inventory stream fish communities. (Fisheries)

Strategy 2: Characterize in-stream and riparian habitats. (Fisheries)

Strategy 3: Work with administering division to address any issues identified in this objective. (Fisheries, Forestry)

Management Objective 4: Continue to provide stream-based angling opportunities.

Strategy 1: Maintain angler access points. (Forestry)

Strategy 2: Continue to manage riparian areas for stream stability and provide quality in-stream habitats for fish and other aquatic organisms. (Forestry)

Management Objective 5: Manage landscapes within priority watersheds to increase diversity of aquatic species on the conservation areas and in the watershed.

Strategy1: Manage areas consistent with the Department's *Watershed and Stream Management Guidelines* (2009). (Forestry)

VII. Public Use Management Considerations

Challenges and Opportunities:

- 1) These three accesses offer numerous public use opportunities, including fishing, hunting, and viewing opportunities. Management of all three areas is focused on providing bank and boat access to the Sac River, Brush Creek, and Weaubleau Creek. Blackjack Access has a concrete boat ramp while Kings Prairie Access has a boat slide that allows small boats and canoes to access the creek.
- 2) This is a rural part of the state, and many local schools are looking for educational opportunities outside of the classroom.

Management Objective 1: Provide for hunting, fishing, and other recreational opportunities.

Strategy 1: Maintain parking lots, trails, and stream accesses throughout the areas. (Forestry)

Strategy 2: Conduct annual management activities that will provide habitat for a diversity of species. (Forestry)

Management Objective 2: Facilitate educational and interpretive opportunities for schools, groups, and the general public.

Strategy 1: Provide areas for field trips (through special-use permits) for schools and groups, when not in conflict with hunting seasons or other area users. (Forestry, Outreach and Education)

Strategy 2: Place signage where significant management activity has occurred to inform area users about resource management practices. (Forestry)

Strategy 3: Provide demonstration areas of resource management for landowners. (Forestry, Private Land Services)

Strategy 4: Work with Outreach and Education consultants in the Kansas City Region to enhance the usability of the areas for the Discover Nature Schools program. (Forestry, Outreach and Education)

VIII. Administrative Considerations

Challenges and Opportunities:

- 1) Evaluate land offered as additions to these areas.
- 2) Continue good relationships with neighboring landowners.

Management Objective 2: Foster good relationships with neighboring landowners.

Strategy 1: Work with neighbors to minimize boundary and trespass issues.
(Forestry, Protection)

Strategy 2: Promote habitat management on neighboring landowner properties.
(Private Land Services)

Lands Proposed for Acquisition:

When available, adjacent land may be considered for acquisition from willing sellers. Tracts that improve area access, provide public use opportunities, contain unique natural communities and/or species of conservation concern, or meet other Department priorities, as identified in the annual Department land acquisition priorities, may be considered. This is especially important along the Brush Creek properties in order to allow possible movement of federally-listed species to or from other nearby populations.

MANAGEMENT TIMETABLE

Strategies are considered ongoing unless listed in the following table:

	FY16	FY17	FY18	FY19	FY20	FY21	FY22	FY23	FY24	FY25
Terrestrial Resource Management										
<i>Objective 1</i>										
Strategy 1	X									
Strategy 2	X									
<i>Objective 2</i>										
Strategy 2	X	X								
Strategy 3	X									
<i>Objective 3</i>										
Strategy 1	X									
Strategy 3	X									
Aquatic Resource Management										
<i>Objective 1</i>										
Strategy 1		X								
Strategy 2		X								
<i>Objective 3</i>										
Strategy 1		X								
Strategy 2		X								

APPENDICES

Public Input Summary:

The draft St. Clair County River Accesses Management Plan was available for a public comment period December 1–31, 2015. The Missouri Department of Conservation received comments from four respondents (Appendix A). The St. Clair County River Accesses Planning Team carefully reviewed and considered these ideas as they finalized this document. A brief summary of public input themes, including how they were incorporated or why they were not, can be found below. Rather than respond to each individual comment, comments are grouped into general themes and are addressed collectively.

Department responses to themes and issues identified through St. Clair County River Accesses public comment period

Supports natural community management and warm-season grasses for wildlife habitat.

We value and appreciate the public's support of our efforts to restore natural communities and provide diverse habitat types including native warm season grasses to meet the needs of Missouri's many wildlife species.

Supports efforts to reduce river erosion.

Thank you for your support for our efforts to stabilize stream banks.

Suggests controlling flooding and allowing farmers to plant soybeans and corn on these areas.

Some level of flooding along streams and rivers is desirable and benefits natural communities. It also helps reduce flood damage for neighbors downstream. Problems arise when flooding is made more frequent or intense by human alterations in the watershed. Land conversion from prairie or forests to row crop, pasture and towns creates more runoff. Flood frequencies are affected by increased runoff. Additionally, both Kings Prairie Access and Blackjack Access have Corps of Engineers flowage easements on them, giving the Corps of Engineers the right to flood those areas within the easement (Appendix 8 and 12).

Row cropping has been discontinued on all three accesses, in part due to frequent flooding, but primarily to restore bottomland hardwood and warm season grass natural community types. These natural communities will serve as vegetated riparian corridors for water quality purposes, and provide habitat for wildlife.

Questions if cemeteries occur on these areas.

No known cemeteries exist on any of the areas addressed in the St. Clair Accesses Area Plan.

Offers to purchase narrow strip of land north of County Road 1000 to alleviate trespass issues onto neighboring property.

Thank you for your offer; it will be forwarded to the Missouri Department of Conservation Reality Committee for consideration.

References:

Missouri Department of Conservation. (2009). *Watershed and stream management guidelines for lands and waters managed by Missouri Department of Conservation*. Jefferson City, Missouri: Missouri Department of Conservation.

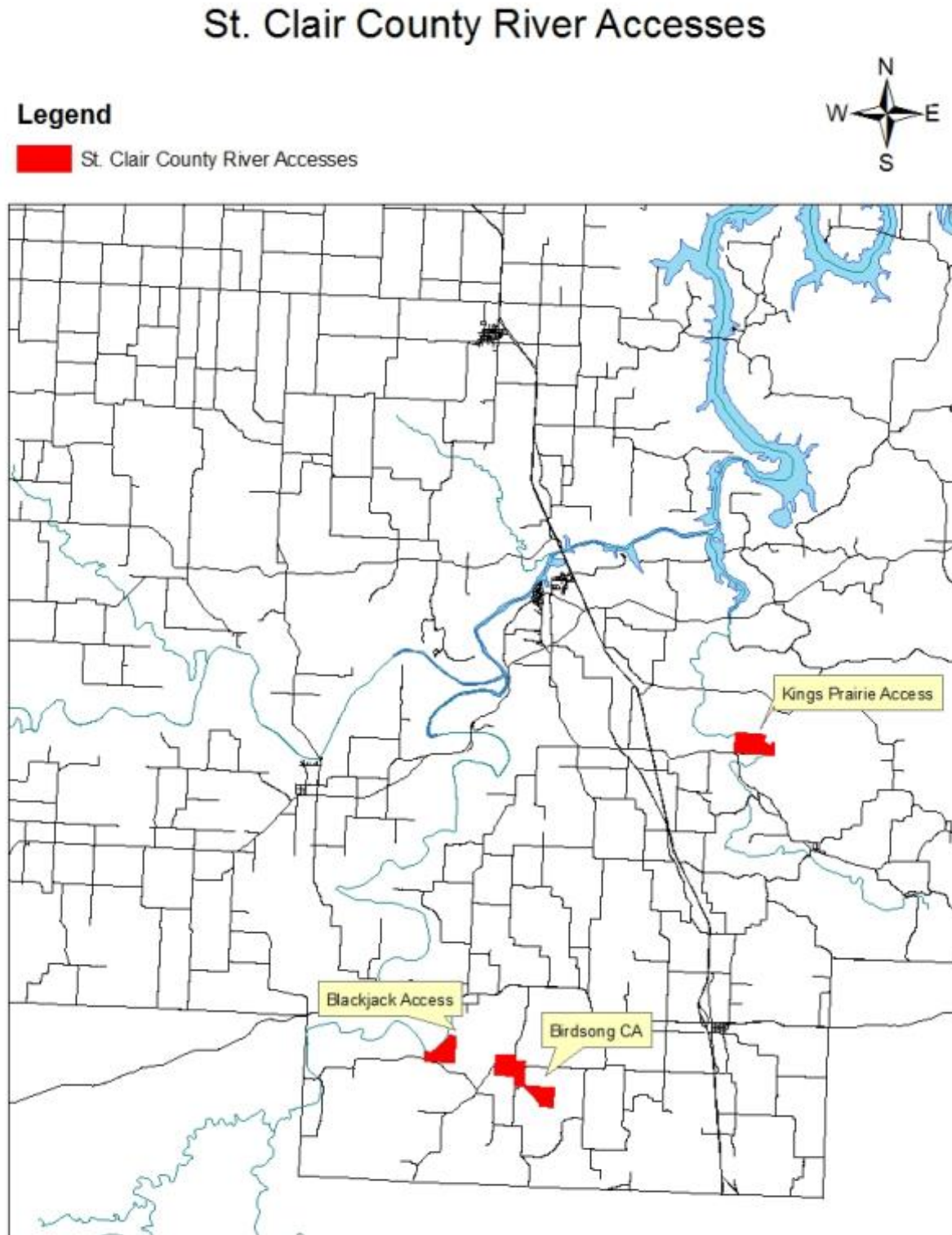
Missouri Department of Conservation. (2014). *Missouri Forest Management Guidelines Voluntary Recommendations for Well-Managed Forests*. Jefferson City, Missouri: Conservation Commission of the State of Missouri.

Missouri Department of Conservation. (2014). *Missouri watershed protection practice recommended practices for Missouri forests: 2014 management guidelines for maintaining forested watersheds to protect streams*. Jefferson City, Missouri: Conservation Commission of the State of Missouri.

Appendices:

- Appendix 1. St. Clair County River Accesses
- Appendix 2. Birdsong CA Access Area Background
- Appendix 3. Map of Birdsong CA
- Appendix 4. Map of Birdsong CA Easements
- Appendix 5. Map of Birdsong CA Land Cover Type
- Appendix 6. Blackjack Access Area Background
- Appendix 7. Map of Blackjack Access
- Appendix 8. Map of Blackjack Access Easements
- Appendix 9. Map of Blackjack Access Land Cover Type
- Appendix 10. Kings Prairie Access Area Background
- Appendix 11. Map of Kings Prairie Access
- Appendix 12. Map of Kings Prairie Access Easements
- Appendix 13. Map of Kings Prairie Access Land Cover Type
- Appendix 14. St. Clair County River Accesses Management Plan Public Comments

Appendix 1. St. Clair County River Accesses



Appendix 2. Birdsong CA Access Area Background

Birdsong CA was purchased in 1980. It contains oak savannas and woodlands with expanses of dolomite glade, common on thin soils and bluffs along Brush Creek. This area also contains several large pockets of native grassland. Restoration efforts are underway, including tree removal and prescribed burning.

Brush Creek is the principle stream on the area. Brush Creek has been identified as a priority watershed for the Department's Kansas City Region Fisheries Division, ranking number 11. There are approximately 1.7 miles of Brush Creek on or bordering the area where it is a fifth-order stream. In 1984, 0.61 miles of Brush Creek and its surrounding land (totaling 26 acres) were nominated and entered into the Department's Natural Areas System due to the presence of three species of conservation concern either on the area or in the watershed. This natural area consists of Department-owned land within 100 yards of Brush Creek and within the "Oberly" tract, which is south and east of the bridge on SE 451 Road. Brush Creek is included in the natural area boundaries and was the first aquatic natural area included into the Natural Areas System.

On the area, Brush Creek and a 50-foot corridor (on both sides) have been identified as critical habitat for a Federally endangered species by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Forty-one fish species have been identified in Brush Creek watershed. The last confirmed observation of the Federally endangered species on the area, and in the watershed, occurred in 1997.

Aquatic invertebrates were studied in 2002. A total of 88 genera of aquatic invertebrates were collected by Gregory S. Wallace (University of Missouri, Columbia) within the Brush Creek watershed at 20 different sites.

Threats to the aquatic community of Brush Creek are typical for many Ozark streams. They include livestock and effects of watershed alteration. These effects include heavy gravel bed load and altered flow regimes in the stream system. In the mid-1990s an EARTH project addressed some watershed management and livestock issues in the watershed. The Humansville waste water treatment plant was upgraded about that same time. However, portions of Brush Creek are still listed on the 2006 Missouri 303d list of impaired waters, which identifies the Humansville Wastewater Treatment Plant as the source.

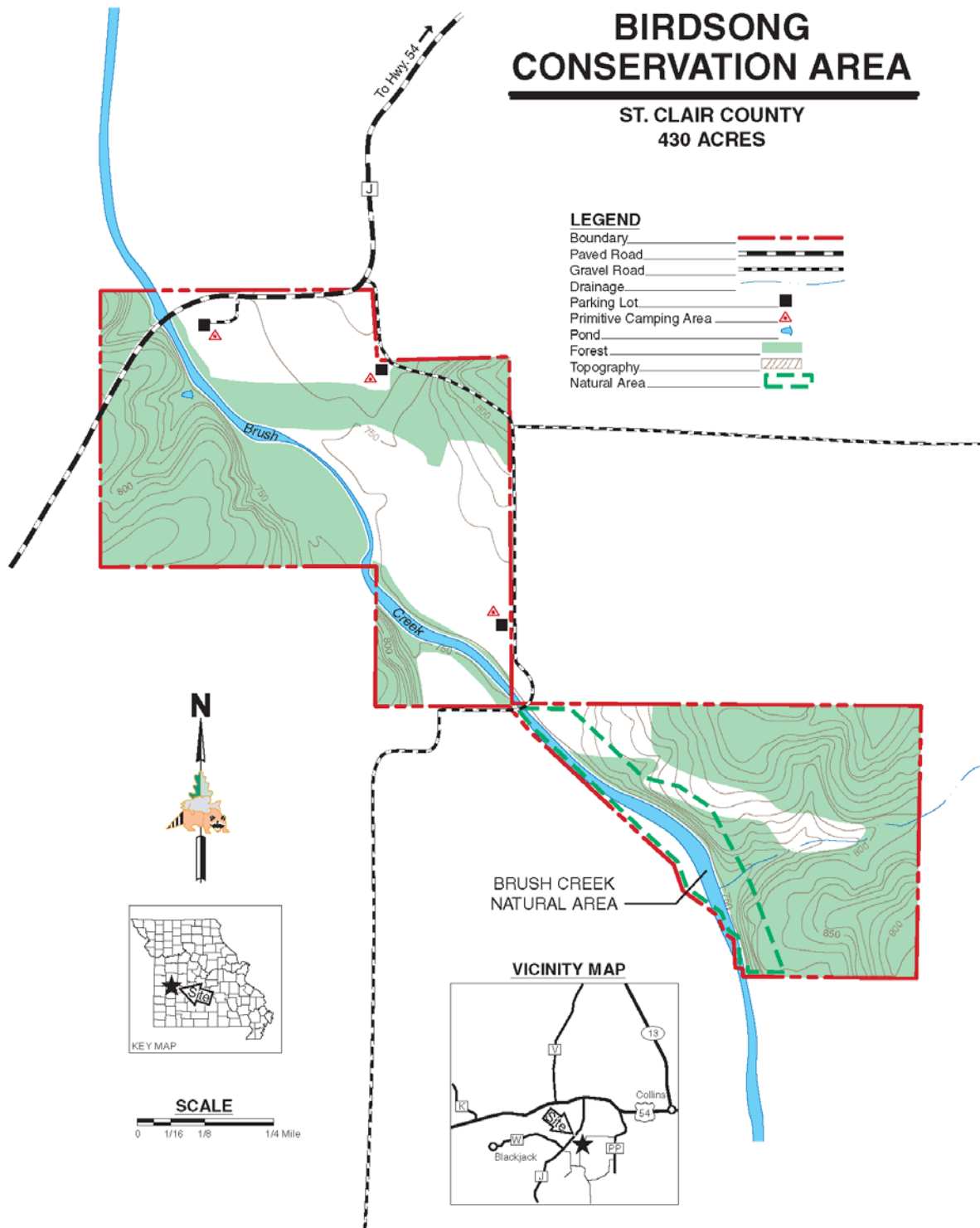
Legal Description: Township 36 North, Range 25 W, Sections 17, 18, 19, 20 and 21.

Area Location: Birdsong Conservation Area is west of Collins on Highway 54 to Route J, then 2.5 miles south.

Current Land and Water Types:

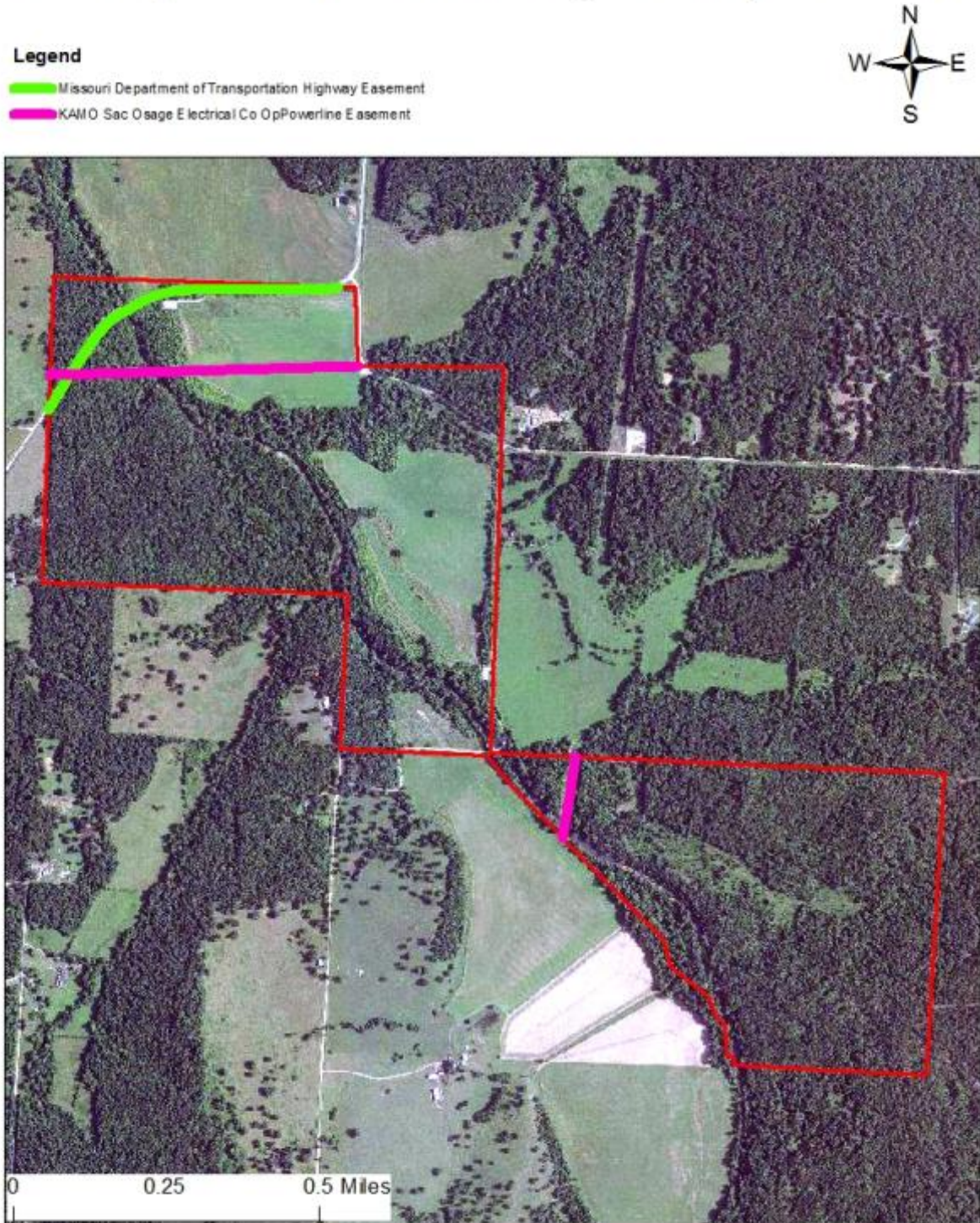
Land/Water Type	Acres	Miles	% of Area
Forest and Woodland	252		59
Old Field	90		21
Native Prairie Planting	35		8
Grassland (Non-Prairie)	31		7
Tree Plantation	20		5
Food Plot	2		<1
Total	430		100
Stream Frontage		2.85	

Appendix 3. Map of Birdsong CA Access

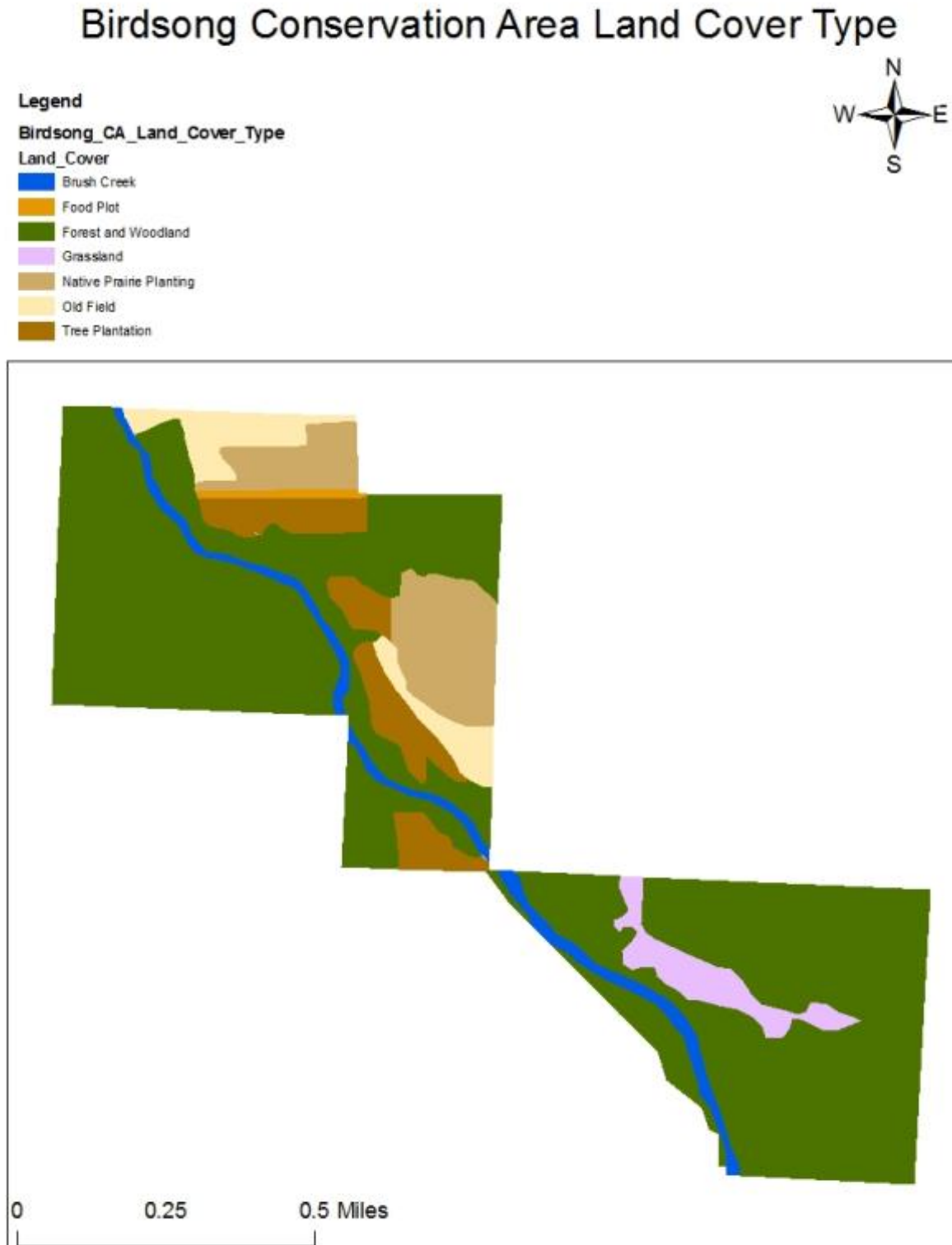


Appendix 4. Map of Birdsong CA Easements

Birdsong Conservation Area Right of Way Easements



Appendix 5. Birdsong CA Land Cover Type



Appendix 6. Blackjack Access Area Background

Blackjack Access was purchased in 1983 and contains a unique complex of grassland, savanna and woodland. Small glade communities can be found with stunted post and blackjack oak adapted to dry, shallow soil conditions. A few unique bluffs are located along the Sac River on the northwest edge of blackjack savanna. Restoration efforts are underway, including tree removal and prescribed burning.

This area lies at the confluence of Brush Creek and Sac River. The area has a concrete boat ramp allowing access to Sac River. Bank fishing is popular on the area, especially at the confluence of Brush Creek and Sac River. The area suffers from bank erosion caused by operation of the Stockton dam, which results in highly fluctuating water levels. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers purchased a 3.5-acre sloughing easement in 1991. Two aquatic Species of Conservation Concern are found near the area in Sac River.

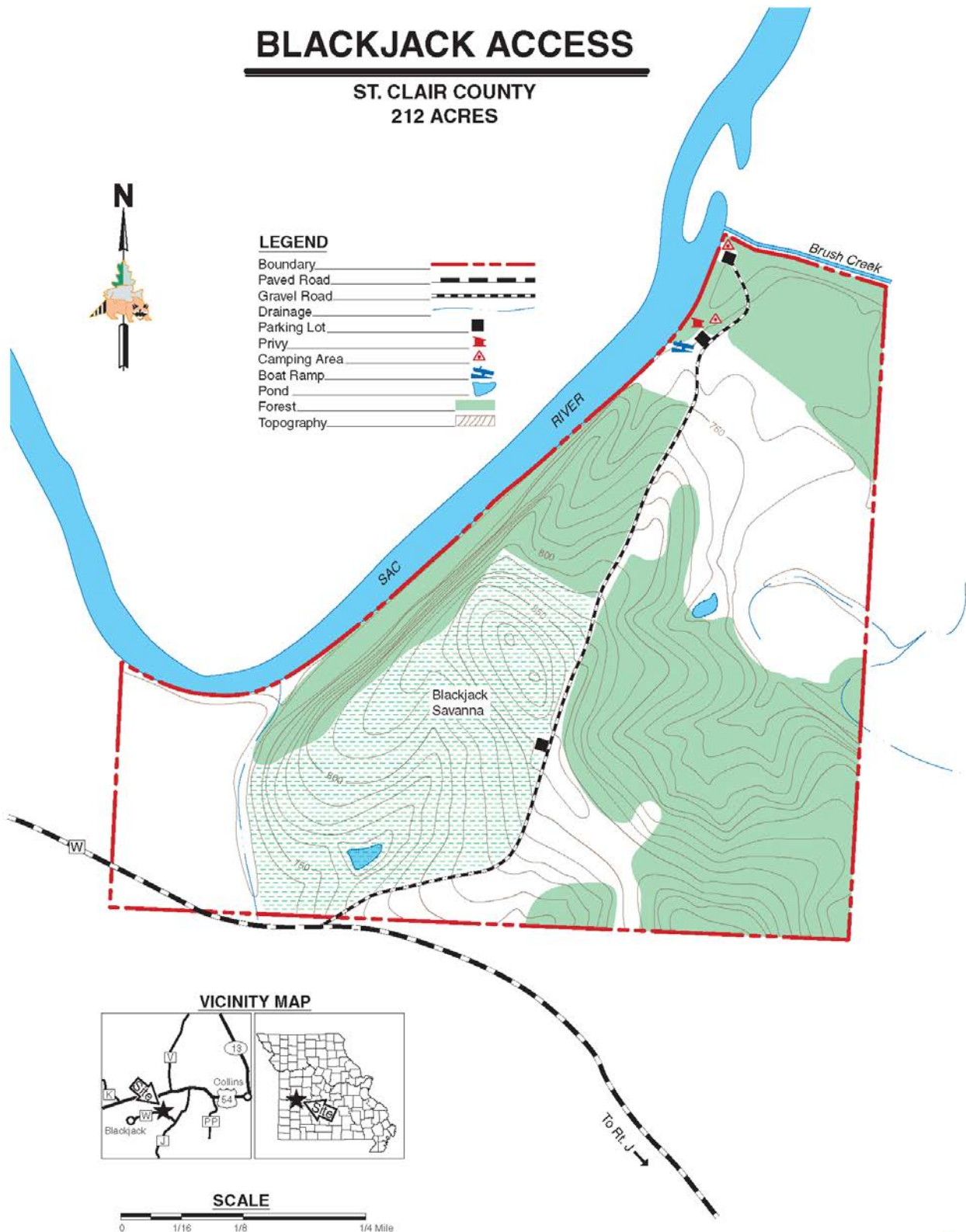
Legal Description: Township 36 North, Range 26 W, Section 13.

Area Location: From Collins, take Highway 54 west about 4 miles, then Route J south about 3 miles, and Route W west to the area.

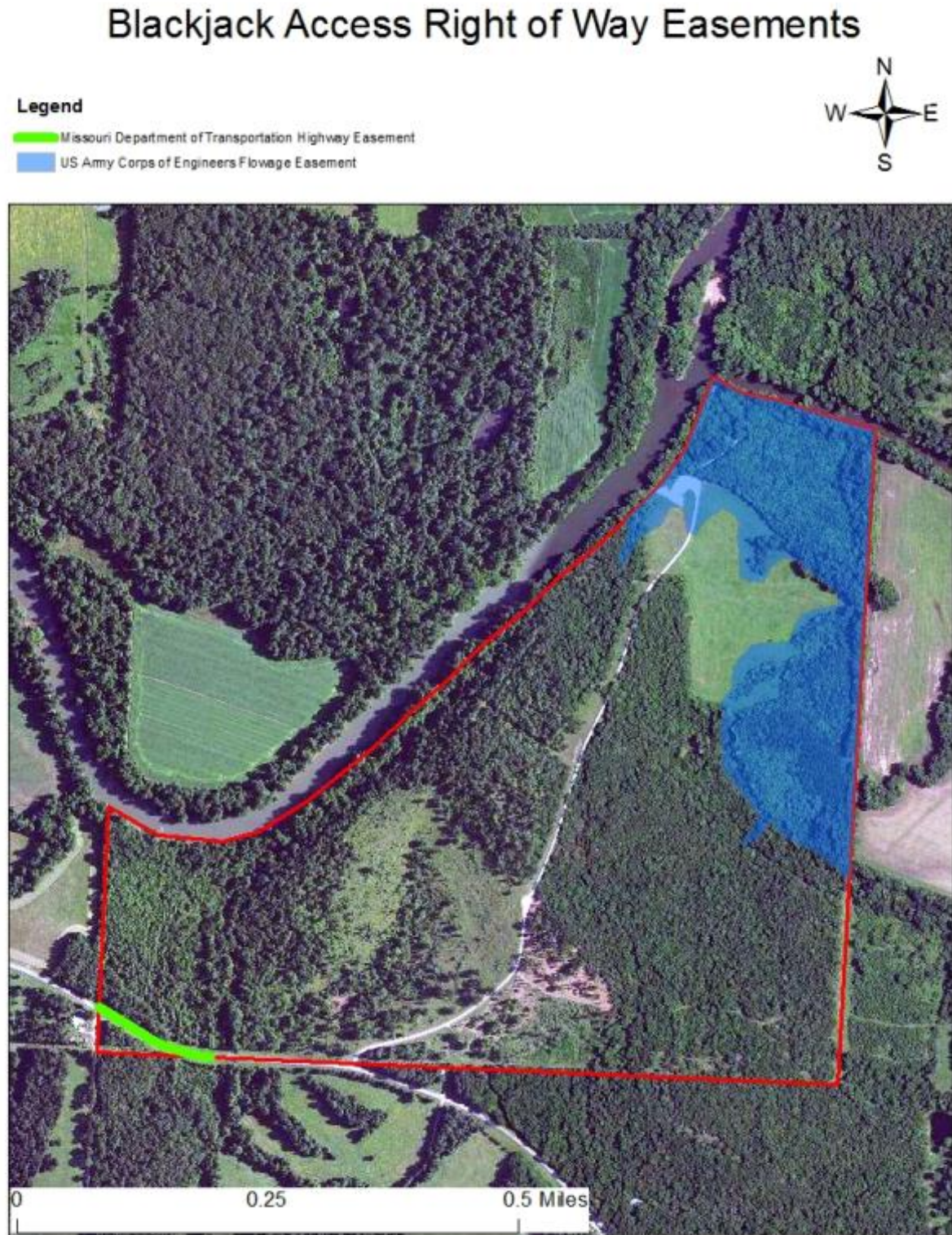
Current Land and Water Types:

Land/Water Type	Acres	Miles	% of Area
Forest and Woodland	118		56
Grassland (Non-Prairie)	42		20
Savanna	41		19
Old Field	11		5
Total	212		100
Stream Frontage		0.98	

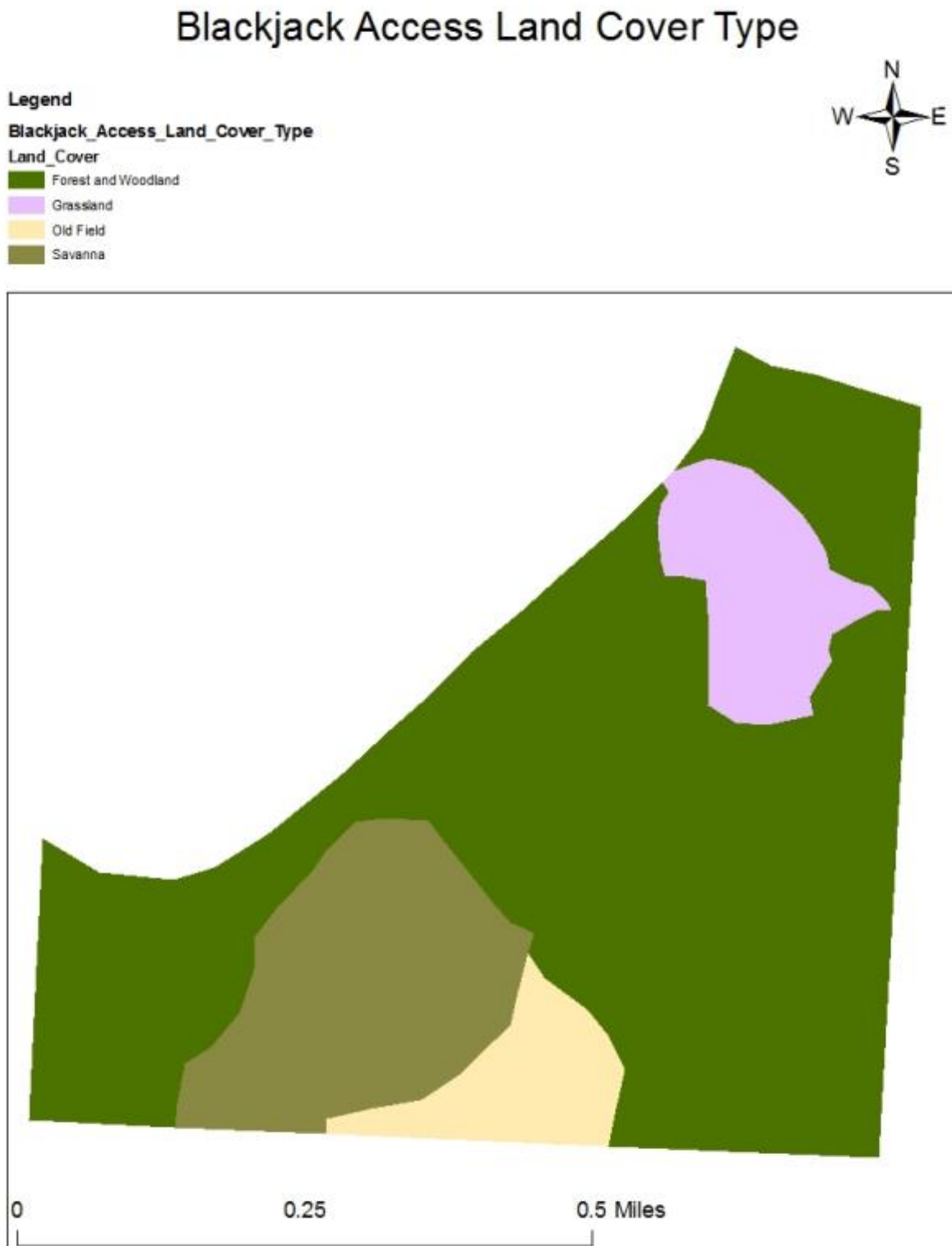
Appendix 7. Map of Blackjack Access



Appendix 8. Map of Blackjack Access Easements



Appendix 9. Map of Blackjack Access Land Cover Type



Appendix 10. Kings Prairie Access Area Background

Kings Prairie Access was purchased in 1981 and contains a mosaic of crop fields, warm-season grass plantings, timber, and old fields. Savanna, glade, and woodland communities dominate the upland sites of this area. Restoration efforts are underway, including tree removal and prescribed burning.

This area lies in lower Weaubleau Creek Watershed. The Harry S. Truman Reservoir flood pool extends onto the area. A parking lot and short footpath allow anglers access to Weaubleau Creek, where they can bank- or wade-fish. They can also portage small boats, canoes or kayaks to the creek. A species of conservation concern has been documented on the area and elsewhere in the watershed.

Weaubleau Creek watershed is a priority watershed for the Department Kansas City Region Fisheries Division, ranking eighth. The watershed of Weaubleau Creek, above Kings Prairie Access, is 78,856 acres in area. Grassland dominates the land cover with over 40,000 acres, followed by deciduous forest with 26,000 acres.

Weaubleau Creek is mostly stable on the area, where it flows along a bluff. However, some areas demonstrate considerable gravel deposition and bank instability. This is most pronounced just above the location where the stream encounters a rocky bluff. Similar areas have been identified as “disturbance reaches” by hydrologists. The Department has attempted to stabilize these eroding banks over the years. In the 1990s a cedar tree revetment was installed, but failed. Later, experimental bank stabilization techniques, using various rock configurations, were tried with mixed results.

Legal Description: Township 37 North, Range 24 W, Sections 5 and 6.

Area Location: From Osceola, take Highway 13 south 4 miles, then Route T east 2.5 miles.

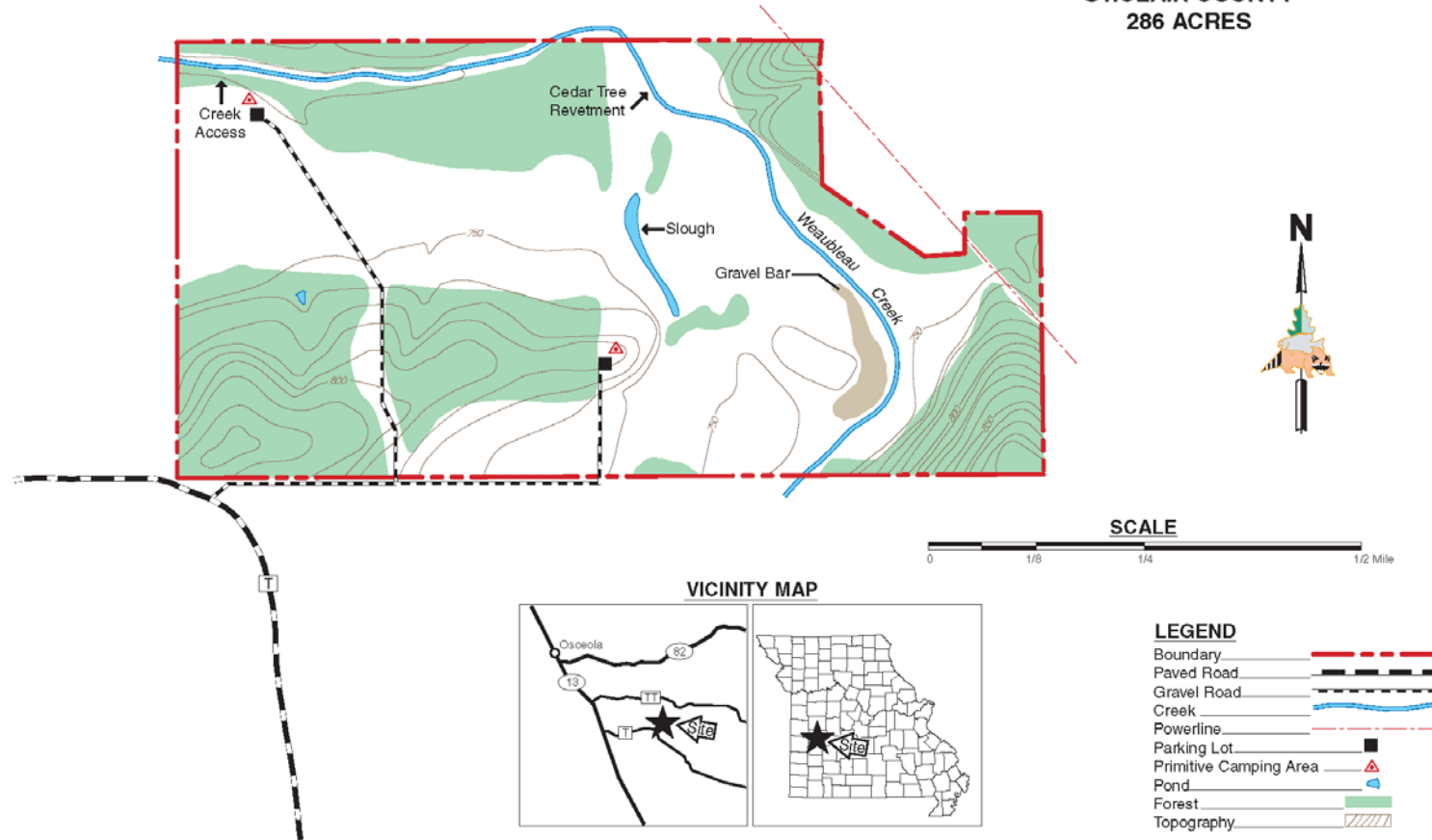
Current Land and Water Types:

Land/Water Type	Acres	Miles	% of Area
Forest and Woodland/Savanna	179		63
Tree Plantation	44		15
Grassland (Non-Prairie)	17		6
Native Grass Planting	16		6
Old Field	14		5
Weaubleau Creek	10		4
Food Plot	4		1
Weaubleau Slough	1		<1
Total	285		100
Stream Frontage		1.46	

Appendix 11. Map of Kings Prairie Access

KINGS PRAIRIE ACCESS

ST. CLAIR COUNTY
286 ACRES

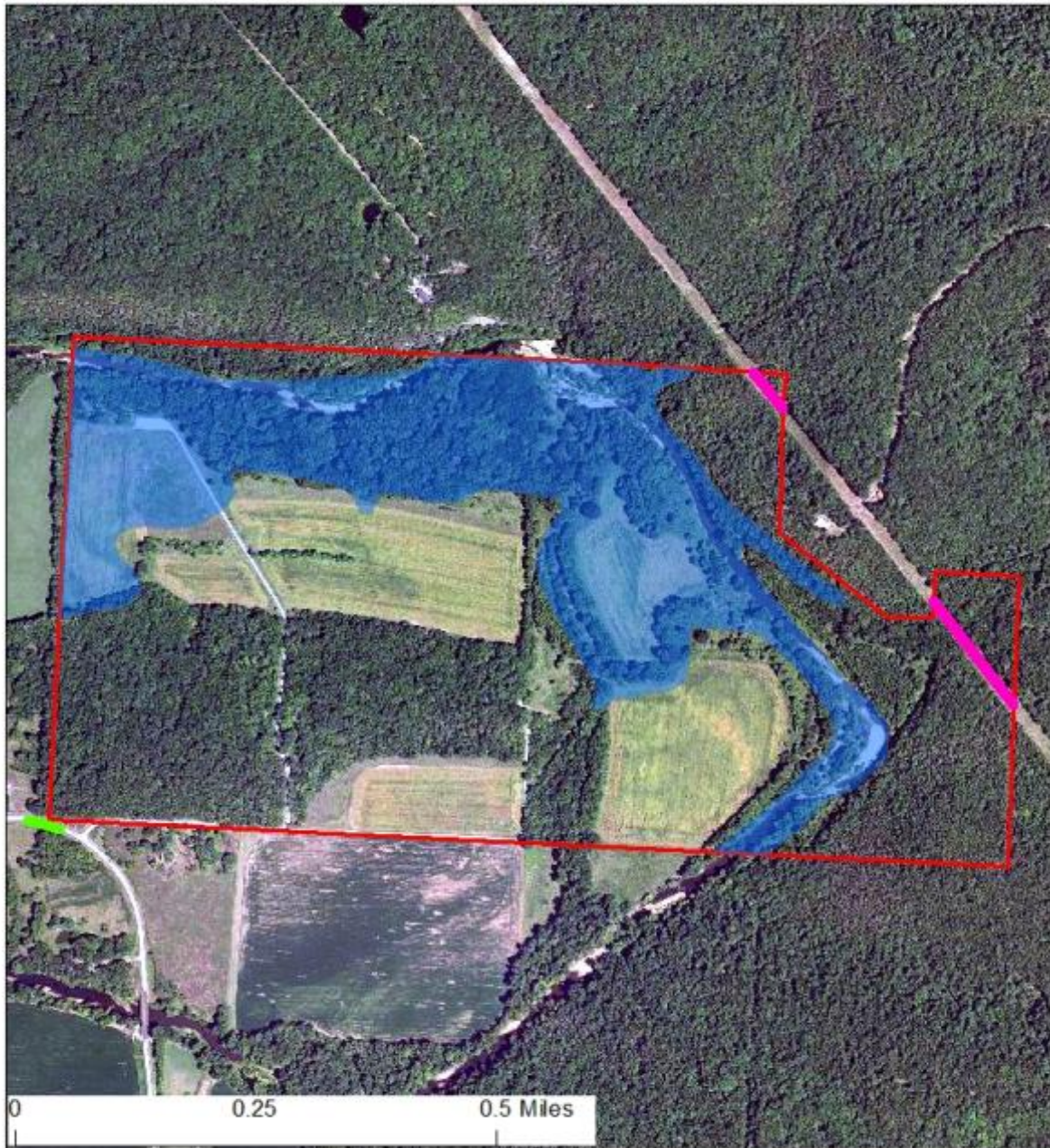


Appendix 12. Map of King's Prairie Access Easements

Kings Prairie Access Right of Way Easements

Legend

- Missouri Department of Transportation Highway Easement
- KAMO Sac Osage Electrical Co OpPowerline Easement
- US Army Corps of Engineers Flowage Easement



Appendix 13. Map of Kings Prairie Access Land Cover Type



Appendix 14. St. Clair County River Accesses Management Plan Public Comments

Received during public comment period (December 1-31, 2015):

Warm season grass plants are welcomed and appreciated. It provides a more native landscape and a suitable habitat for native species. Particularly bobwhite quail. Grassland birds have suffered due to invasive grasses. Thank you for provision for native warm season grasses.

Will more cemeteries be flooded or destroyed? My GGrandparents headstone was moved for Truman to Parks/Shady Grove and I want to know what cemeteries are in this plan? I do cemetery lookups for St Clair County.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Birdsong Area. It is great for the MDC to provide an area for the public to use. However with every good thing comes a few inconveniences to those who join the properties. I own land that is on the north side of the Birdsong Area. There is a small sliver of land that sets along the north side of Co Rd. 1000, between my property and the road. This small strip acts as an avenue for hunters to come over on my land with out being seen crossing the fence. It is clearly signed showing that the MDC land stops and private land begins. I have set and watched hunter after hunter come to the fence, look around and come on over. There are a few respectable hunters which I have watched that look it over, set along the fence or just turn around, but not many. Is there a possibility that this strip of land could be purchased to avoid the continued trespassing onto my land? County Road 1000 would then be your north boundary, a clear and established boundary that shouldn't be abused. Thanks for your consideration.

I agree there needs to be some work to keep the river from eroding anymore. I would also like more effort in letting farmers plant soybeans and corn in the plots. Trying to stop the flooding of the land would also assure the farmers better change of not loosing their crops.